

## SPEAKING ASSESSMENT FOR STUDENTS OF MEDICAL LABORATORY TECHNOLOGY AT AKJP II PEKANBARU

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### Abstract

Despite the fact that English is adopted as compulsory subject in higher education and extended period of learning, students still have low proficiency level. Thus, studies on students' proficiency level need to be conducted for an effectively designed classroom activities. The purpose of this study was to assess students' speaking skills to obtain a comprehensive review. This study involved students of Akademi Kesehatan John Paul II Pekanbaru. The instrument of this study was rubric assessment with four aspects assessed: grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation. The average speaking performance was 2.25 in satisfactory level. The lowest result was grammar with the average score of 2.56 in satisfactory category, whereas the highest result was pronunciation, 3.08, good category. The results of vocabulary and fluency were 2.79 and 2.82 in satisfactory level. In conclusion, students' speaking performances were still in satisfactory level. Improvements were needed in grammar, vocabulary and fluency

**Keywords:** speaking, assessment, students, medical laboratory technology

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### Introduction

Industrial revolution 4.0. opens wide access to digital technology, thus literacy become one of the core components in this era. In fact, there are three kinds of literacy developing in this era, data literacy, technology literacy, and human literacy (Fitriyani & Aziz, 2019). To be able to keep up with these sorts of literacy, English is essentially needed. One of the strategies applied is adapting English into curriculum including in higher Education. In some need assessment conducted by Aflah and Rahmani (Aflah & Rahmani, 2018) revealed that English is needed in higher Education to help students access written information like articles, references, journals and help students in conducting presentation or public speaking in English.

Medical laboratory technology is one of the majors in higher education that really need English these days. One of the learning outcome in curriculum states that a medical technologists should be able to communicate and explain laboratory procedure to patients in

English (Aflah & Rahmani, 2018). This was supported by the decree of Minister of Health of the Republic of Indonesia No. 370/Menkes/SK/III/2007 which stated that a medical technologist must have English competencies which enable them to communicate with patients, read and explain procedure, and operate, calibrate, and maintain laboratory instruments (Fitriyani & Aziz, 2019). Therefore, English has become a compulsory subject in higher education, especially in medical laboratory technology. Their duties as a medical technologist rely on their English competencies.

However, the English speaking skill which is mentioned in the learning outcome of curriculum can hardly be achieved by universities with non-English department. Most students can hardly speak English even though they have learned English since they were in elementary school which means that they have learned English for over 15 years before they are admitted to higher educations (Fahmi et al., 2020). Most students were also found to have low

English proficiency level (Masduki, 2011). Specifically in the major of health sciences, more than half of the students were still classified in the beginner level (Sulistiana et al., 2019). Similarly, students' low proficiency level was also found in the nutrition science (Aflah & Rahmani, 2018) and medical record technology (Setyowati, 2012). Previous research in the major of medical laboratory technology which specified in listening, structure, and reading skill also found that more than half of the students were also classified in the basic level (Juita & H, 2019).

An effectively designed classroom activities is significantly needed to achieve the learning outcome, that it to have the students to be able to use English pertaining to their job duties. Therefore, a comprehensive overview about students' English language skills is needed. This research was complementary to the previous research about students' English proficiency (Juita & H, 2019). The previous research has not assessed students' speaking skill in English. It was essential to obtain a comprehensive overview about students' English proficiency to have an effectively designed classroom activities and learning strategies to achieve the learning outcome.

#### **Four Language Skills**

Jing in Akram stated that the general outcome of foreign language teaching and learning is to develop communicative competence on a daily basis (Akram & Manik, 2010). This implies that language teaching and learning should be able to encourage students to use that language for communication. It includes using the language appropriately during interpersonal communication in all social contexts, including linear, interactional and transactional communication

In general, there are four significant language skills that needs to be mastered by a language learner including listening, speaking, reading, and writing respectively. Assessment of language proficiency is performed based on the ability of the language learner to apply these four language skills to create an effective communication setting. In language learning, they are considered as the basic of communication in real life setting. They are used to exchange communication between the speakers (Sadiku, 2015).

Among these four language skills, listening and reading are classified into language input, and speaking and writing are therefore categorized in language output. Prior to oral communication, the students initially learn to access information through written text. This also develops their writing skills. They usually write what they want to say in the language to reduce their anxiety about language errors. Furthermore, listening skills enable the language learners to learn how to give appropriate verbal responses based on the information or questions that he heard (Kurniasih, 2016).

#### **Speaking Skill**

Among the four language skills - listening, speaking, reading, and writing – speaking is considered the most important one for ages. The success of language teaching and learning are frequently assessed based on the ability of the language learners to communicate in that language. Judgment on how proficient someone in a foreign language is often based solely on how well and how fluent he can communicate using the language. Therefore, it has been said that speaking skill is among the top priority of language learning processes (Leong & Ahmadi, 2017).

Speaking generally focuses on verbal interaction between the first and

second speaker. There are many things involved in this interaction. They involve the speakers' knowledge of the language including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, etc (Parmawati & Inayah, 2019). Lack of this knowledge can result in misunderstanding during the interaction. In terms grammar, the way the speaker describing events being in progress in the past and present are completely different. Moreover, word choice is also important because there are no words that are interchangeable in all contexts. Thus, speaking skill is complex involving all speakers' knowledge about that language. This underlies the importance of speaking skill among all language skills.

### Basic Types of Speaking

Brown pointed out that there are some types of speaking (Brown, 2004):

1. Imitative speaking which emphasizes imitation. It emphasizes the ability to imitate words, phrases, or sentences.
2. Intensive speaking which involves the ability to produce short sentences with limited knowledge about grammar, phrases, and the like.
3. Responsive speaking which limits the ability of interaction in the form of greetings, small talks, request for help, and so on.
4. Interactive speaking which is part of interaction which involves several speakers in complicated interaction and extended duration.
5. Extensive speaking which limits the interaction between speakers. It usually focuses on one way interaction exactly the same way the speakers in a presentation or storytelling

### Speaking Assessment

There are two ways of conducting assessment, holistic and analytic scoring. In holistic scoring, a

single score is used to summarize the assessment. Analytic scoring is conducted with a rubric consisting of many aspects which can be assessed to sum up the result of assessment (Razali & Isra, 2016).

Brown highlighted some important aspects to be considered in speaking assessment processes (Brown, 2004):

1. Grammar which emphasizes the assessment the students' ability to use grammar correctly and appropriately in sentences.
2. Vocabulary which puts emphasis on the students' ability to choose the appropriate vocabulary to be used in corresponding context.
3. Fluency which highlights the students' ability to express their messages in a comprehensive manner without hesitation.
4. Pronunciation which analyze students' ability to pronounce words based on standard and acceptable pronunciation.

Brown converted each category into the score 1-5 in which each score has its own interpretation about the test takers' ability where 1 is the lowest score obtained and 5 is the highest score. 1 represents basic level where errors are often encountered in the aspects, but the message that is being delivered is still understandable. In contrast, 5 represents a proficiency level equivalent to educated native speakers can speak English fluently to the level where the grammar, choice of words, pronunciation and pronunciation are fully accepted and understood by native speakers and there are no difficulties in delivering messages and interaction in that language.

The assessment scores are subsequently interpreted by Brown and Abeywickrama in Rahmawati dan Ertin (Rahmawati & Ertin, 2014) into performance category. The highest

score, 5, is considered excellent coded as E, score 4 is considered very good coded as VG, Score 3 is considered good coded as G, score 2 is considered satisfactorily represented by S, and the lowest score, 1, is considered poor represented by P.

### **Purpose of Assessment**

There are some advantages which can be attained from conducting gradual assessment during the teaching and learning processes. It could be beneficial for both teacher and students. For teachers, it can be used as a means to figure out students' difficulties during the teaching and learning processes. Furthermore, the result of assessment can also be used as a tool for evaluating the progress in a class. Besides, it can be beneficial to evaluate curriculum applied in class (Idayani & Rugaiyah, 2017). For students, they are informed about their progress so that they can set their own pace of learning themselves. Moreover, because it serves as feedback for the students, they exactly recognize their excellence or failure, so that they are motivated to accomplish their learning goals (Hidayah, 2017).

### **Research Method**

This was a descriptive quantitative study where data gathered and subsequently analyze to describe a phenomena of interest (Gay et al., 2012). The numerical data were collected from the result of speaking assessment of the students of Medical Laboratory Technology at Akademi Kesehatan John Paul II Pekanbaru. There were 102 students who had been assessed. The assessment was conducted for 3 months. To maintain the objectivity of the assessment, there were only 10 students assessed each day. The instrument used for data collection was oral speech, and the type of speaking applied is intensive speaking. The topic chosen for assessment was those related to their

daily life. This topic was chosen to eliminate the fact that the students have different background knowledge about the topic. They must know what and how to tell about themselves to others. The students were given fifteen minutes to prepare themselves and to sort out the information what they would share. Afterwards, they should demonstrate their ability in speaking English corresponding to the instructions given.

### **Result and Discussion**

#### **Overall Performance**

The highest score obtained for the average performance was 4.5 falling between very good and excellent and the lowest score obtained was 2 coded as satisfactory. There were 4 students (3.92%) obtain score of 4.5 for average performance. This score was actually the middle range between very good and excellent which meant that the students have nearly excellent speaking skill. Moreover, there are 2 students (1.96%) who obtained score of 4.25 and there were 5 students (4.9%) who obtained score of 4. The score fell within the category of very good. They cover only 10.78% of the total population. This indicated that 10.78% of the students can speak English very well. They can be considered in advanced level

Furthermore, there were 5 students (4.9%) who obtained score of 3.75 which was coded as good. There were 7 students (6.87%) who obtained score of 3.5 which was also categorized as good. There were 4 students (3.92%) who obtained score of 3.25. Finally, there were 17 students (16.67%) who obtained score of 3. To sum up, there were a total of 32.27% of the students which categorized to have good speaking skills.

There were 2 students (1.96%) who obtained score of 2.75 which fell within the category of satisfactory. There were 11 students (10.78%) who obtained

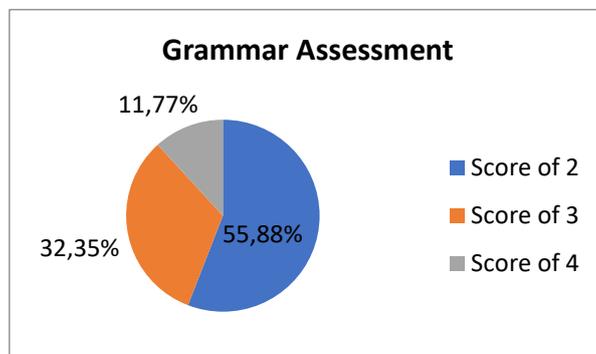
score of 2.5. There were 30 students (29.42%) who obtained score of 2.25. There were 15 students (14.71%) who obtained score of 2. Based on the score distribution, the highest number of students (30 students or 29.24%) obtained the score of 2.25. A total of 56.95% of the students was classified in the category of satisfactory which means that they have basic skills to speak English. This can be considered beginner level.

Those three-general classification of speaking skills indicated that more than half of the students are able to

speak English in basic level. They can hardly explore or improvise while speaking English.

**Grammar Assessment**

The average result of grammar assessment was 2.56 which meant that most of the students’ performance in grammar was in satisfactory level. The result of grammar assessment of the students ranged from 2 to 4. The lowest score obtained was 2 and the highest one was 4. The grammar assessment is presented in the below chart.



**Figure 1.** The result of Grammar Assessment

In grammar assessment, most students, 57 students (55.88%) obtained score of 2. The second highest was score of 3 obtained by 33 students (32.25%)

and there were 12 students (11.77%) who obtained score of 4. The score descriptor is presented in the below table

**Table 1.** Score Descriptor of Grammar Assessment

GRAMMAR	
Score	Proficiency Descriptor
2	In general, the speaker can handle basic construction quite accurately but does not have complete control of grammar
3	Control of grammar is good. Capable to sufficiently speak the language with adequate structural accuracy to participate in either formal or informal conversation ranging from practical, social, or casual to professional topics
4	Good at accurate use of language on all levels normally related to professional needs. Errors in grammar are quite rare

Source: (Brown, 2004)

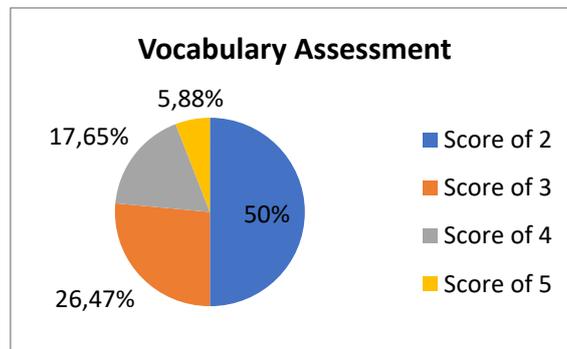
The proficiency descriptor in grammar for most students (55.88%) shows that most students can use

grammar in the level of elementary construction though they sometimes hesitate about the use of tenses in sentences. There were no obvious

problems with basic and simple sentences. However, the students still had difficulties in constructing complex sentences. 32.25% students who obtained score of 3 were described to be able to choose which tenses to be used when they engage in conversations. They can also participate in more conversation setting ranging from casual to more formal conversation. There are only 11.77% students who can use grammar related to professional aspects. The grammar errors can hardly be found in this aspect.

**Vocabulary Assessment**

The average result of vocabulary assessment was 2.79 falling within the satisfactory category. The result of vocabulary assessment ranged from 2 through 5. 2 was the lowest score obtained and 5 was the highest score. The information is presented in the following chart.



**Figure 2.** The Result of Vocabulary Assessment

Most of the students, 51 students (50%) obtained score of 2. There were 27 students (26.47%) who obtained score of 3, 18 students (17.65%) who obtained score of 4, and 6 students

(5.88%) who obtained score of five. The following table represents the score descriptor for vocabulary:

**Table 2.** Score Descriptor of Vocabulary Assessment

VOCABULARY	
SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
2	The vocabulary is sufficient enough to express himself simply with the presence of some circumlocutions
3	Speaking is possible with sufficient vocabulary to effectively participat in either formal or informal conversation taking place in practical, social, and professional circumstances. Broad enough vocabulary so that the speaker has rarely to grope for a word
4	Able to understand and participate in any conversations categorized within the range of his experience with a high degree of precision of vocabulary
5	Speech delivery is fully accepted by educated native speakers in all aspects including breadth of vocabulary and idioms, colloquialisms related to cultural references.

Source: (Brown, 2004)

Based on the descriptor of vocabulary, 50% of the students had

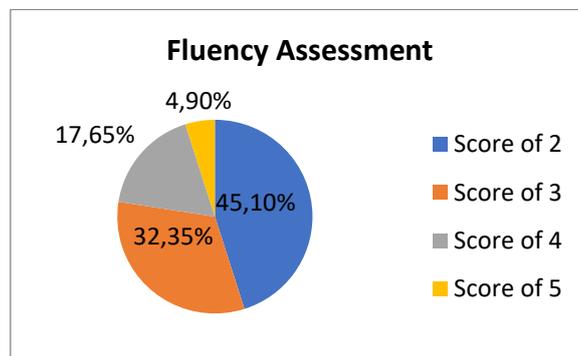
limited vocabulary which needs them to use many unnecessary sentences to

deliver their message. However, 26.47% of the students have sufficient vocabulary to engage in real life setting ranging from casual to more formal situation. They can also pick the appropriate vocabulary corresponding to the context of the conversation. 17.65% of the students can choose appropriate vocabulary precisely in all contexts. Finally, only 5.88% of the students had wide range of vocabulary and familiar

with idioms frequently used in daily interaction as native speakers of English.

**Fluency Assessment**

The average result of fluency assessment was 2.82 that was still categorized in satisfactory level. The result of fluency assessment ranged from 2 through 5. The lowest score was 2 and the highest score was 5. The information can be seen in the following chart:



**Figure 3.** The Result of Fluency Assessment

Most of the students obtained score of 2, as many as 46 students (45.10%). There were 33 students (32.35%) who obtained score of 3. There were 18 students (17.65%) who obtained

score of 4. There were 5 students (4.90%) who obtained score of 5. The following table presents the descriptor for each score previously discussed.

**Table 3.** Score Descriptor of Fluency Assessment

FLUENCY	
SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
2	No problem associated with confidence but not with facility in most social situations which include introductions and casual conversations about current events, as well as work, family, and autobiographical information
3	Relatively easy to discuss particular interests of competence. The speaking has no problems of groping for words
4	capable to use the language fluently on all levels related to professional needs. Can easily participate in any conversations related to his own experience with a high degree of fluency
5	Complete fluency in the language thus speech delivery is obviously accepted by educated native speakers

Source: (Brown, 2004)

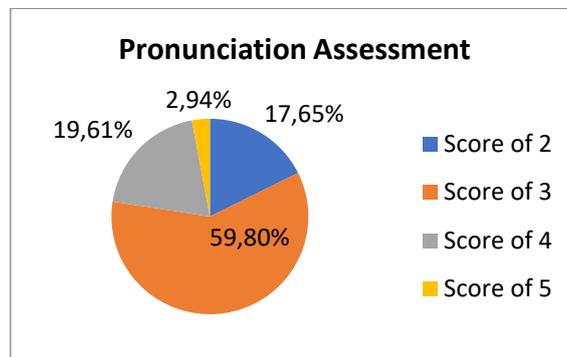
Obviously, 45.10% of the students can deliver information about their daily life in social settings.

Therefore, there were only slight difficulties to speak English in this matter. 32.35% of the students were able

to discuss wider range of topic related to their competence. They rarely paused to think before they speak. Sufficient fluency could be seen in 17.65% where they could talk about matters about which they had background knowledge. Complete fluency was attained by only 4.90% of the students where they can convey information and ideas fluently accepted by educated native speakers.

The average score of pronunciation assessment was 3.08 which meant that the average students' performance in pronunciation was good. This is the highest score obtained of the four aspects. The score ranged from 2 to 5 where lowest score was 2 and the highest score was 5. A complete result of assessment can be seen in the following chart.

**Pronunciation Assessment**



**Figure 4.** The Result of Pronunciation Assessment

Most of the students, 61 students (59.80%) obtained score of 5. The second highest number was score of 4 obtained by 20 students (19.61%). Two categories with the lowest number were score of 2 attained by 18 students

(17.65%) and score of 5 attained by 3 students (2.94%). The description of proficiency for each category is presented in the following table.

**Table 4.** Score Descriptor of Pronunciation Assessment

PRONUNCIATION	
SCORE	DESCRIPTOR
2	Accent is intelligible though some errors are frequently found
3	Errors which appears during the speech never interfere with understanding
4	Errors in terms of pronunciation is quite rare
5	Equals to pronunciation of educated native speakers

Source: (Brown, 2004)

Most of the students (59.80%) obtained score of 3 where there were still errors in pronunciation. However, it did not hinder in understanding the messages delivered by the speaker. 19.61% of the students could even pronounce words accurately and there were rarely found errors in their pronunciation. However,

there were still 17.65% of the students who had difficulties with pronunciation and there were many errors found in their pronunciation. Nevertheless, the speech was still understandable by the listeners. In contrast, 2.94% of the students can pronounce word well and

accurately as they way educated native speakers pronounce it.

### Conclusion

There were 4 aspects assessed to describe someone's speaking ability which includes grammar, vocabulary, fluency, and pronunciation. In grammar, the students still had limited knowledge in grammar, so that they were only able to construct simple sentences and there were still errors found in the choice of tenses to be used in delivering messages. In terms of vocabulary, the students had no difficulty to pick the appropriate vocabulary used though it was limited to social setting discussing about real life situation and daily matters. However, they still had difficulties conveying the messages fluently. In regard to pronunciation, the students still showed errors in pronunciation while demonstrating their speaking ability, but these errors did not interfere the messages being delivered, so that their speech was still understandable by their listeners.

In conclusion, the students were able to speak English confidently using simple sentences to talk about many things related to them. although there were still some errors found in grammar, vocabulary and pronunciation, their speech was still understandable. However, most of the students still have difficulties if they were instructed to speak English for professional needs. Drills and exercises about speaking English for professional needs are needed. Improvements were still needed in grammar, vocabulary, and fluency.

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